

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 336 096

IR 053 647

TITLE Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse Annual Report. May 1987-June 30, 1988.

INSTITUTION Oregon State Library, Salem. Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse.

PUB DATE 88

NOTE 6p.; For the second and third annual reports, see ED 333 890 and IR 053 648.

AVAILABLE FROM Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse, Oregon State Library, State Library Building, Salem, OR 97310.

PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Adolescent Literature; *Censorship; Childrens Literature; Elementary Secondary Education; *Intellectual Freedom; *Learning Resources Centers; *Library Materials; Parent Grievances; *Public Libraries; School Libraries

IDENTIFIERS *Oregon

ABSTRACT

Established in May 1987 by the Oregon State Library to serve as a central clearinghouse for the collection of reports about challenges against library materials, the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse received a total of 17 formal challenges against library materials during its first year of operation. Of these, 10 challenges were received by 6 public libraries, and 7 were received by as many school library media centers. In 14 cases, the materials were retained in the library with decisions made by librarians, school principals, library boards, and/or school boards. In two cases, materials were removed from the library, and in one case access to a book was restricted. The more numerous objections to library materials were focused on stories or illustrations considered to be too scary or violent, to use profane or inappropriate language, and to contain sexual references inappropriate for juvenile readers; books with perceived or real occult or witchcraft content were also challenged. Specific information on the challenges is provided in a list that is organized by type of library and the name of the library where the challenge occurred. This list includes the title and author of each book and summaries of both the objections made and the actions taken for each one. Included in the report are statements of the goals and objectives of the Clearinghouse, a summary of the number and type of information requests received, and a summary of cooperative activities in which the Clearinghouse engaged. (MAB)

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OREGON INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM CLEARINGHOUSE

Annual Report
May, 1987 - June 30, 1988

Oregon State Library
Salem, Oregon

Mary Ginnane
Coordinator

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Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse Annual Report

May, 1987-June 30, 1988

Coordinator, Mary Ginnane, (503) 378-2112

Introduction

The Oregon State Library established the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse in May, 1987, in response to the need for a central clearinghouse for the collection of reports about challenges against library materials. This first annual report of the Clearinghouse will summarize activities during the time period between establishment and June 30th, 1988. Future annual reports of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse will report on activities between July 1st and June 30th of each year and will be released during Banned Books Week in September of each year.

Goal

The goal of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse is to uphold the principles of the Library Bill of Rights in all types of libraries by improving communication between librarians, board members, professional associations, and other concerned groups in Oregon about challenges to intellectual freedom, and by increasing awareness as to how threats to intellectual freedom can be overcome.

Objectives

- To establish a central clearinghouse to collect reports about challenges to intellectual freedom in all types of Oregon libraries.
- To provide information about challenged materials to public library directors and library board members, school media center librarians, and academic librarians when requests for reconsideration of materials are formally registered.
- To provide information to public library directors and library board members, school media center librarians, and academic librarians about establishing appropriate policies and procedures before a challenge to intellectual freedom occurs.
- To cooperate with other persons and groups concerned with intellectual freedom or related issues.

Challenges Reported

A total of 17 formal challenges against library materials occurred during the time period covered by this annual report. Between May, 1987 and June 30th, 1988, 16 challenges against library materials were reported by librarians directly to the Clearinghouse. One other challenge was identified through local newspaper reports. A formal challenge is defined here as a written "Request for Reconsideration" or "Statement of Concern" submitted by a group or individual to a library.

In 14 of these cases the materials were retained in the library with decisions made by librarians, school principals, library boards, and/or school boards. In two cases materials were removed from the library, and in one case access to a book was restricted. Specific information about these challenges is given below, arranged according to library type. The formal challenges were submitted to each library by individuals, unless otherwise noted.

Challenges Against Library Materials in Public Libraries

Albany Public Library, Albany

- *Father Christmas* by Raymond Briggs (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: References to cursing, drinking, negative image of Santa; anti-Christmas.

Summary of events after submission of formal challenge: Book selection committee evaluated book; recommendation submitted to Board; book retained in final decision by Board of Trustees, 5/28/87.

Springfield Public Library, Springfield

- *The Happy Prince and Other Stories* by Oscar Wilde (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Stories distressing and morbid for young readers; not light-hearted fairy tales.

Summary of events after submission of formal challenge: Material evaluated by staff; retained in final decision by Children's Librarian, 7/24/87; no further appeal.

The Dalles-Wasco County Public Library, The Dalles

- *Magick in Theory and Practice* by Aleister Crowley (Adult)

Summary of objections: Book promotes criminal activity in sacrifice of humans and animals; may influence individuals and be used as a textbook for sacrifice.

Summary of events after submission of formal challenge: Reviews and materials selection policy provided to individual requesting reconsideration; Library Board considered the matter; book retained in final decision by Library Board, 8/12/87.

Multnomah County Library, Portland

- *The Witch's Sister* by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Occult topics could be frightening and traumatic for children; inappropriate portrayal of parents.

Summary of events after submission of formal challenge: Review of material by staff; book retained in final decision by Youth Services Coordinator, 8/14/87; no further appeal.

- *The Enormous Crocodile* by Roald Dahl (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Sinister nature of story; negative action of animals particularly against children.

Summary of events after submission of formal challenge: Review of material by staff; retained in final decision by Youth Services Coordinator, 8/17/87; no further appeal.

- *Belinda* by Anne Rampling (Adult)

Summary of objections: Sexual nature of subject matter particularly between adult and child.

Summary of events after submission of formal challenge: Review of material by staff; retained in final decision by Adult Services Coordinator, 8/27/88; no further appeal.

- *Some Swell Pup* by Maurice Sendak (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Inappropriate subject matter for children; dog urinates on people; children abuse animals.

Summary of events after submission of formal challenge: Review of material by staff; retained in final decision by Youth Services Coordinator, 8/31/87; no further appeal.

- *Perez and Martina* by Pura Belpre (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Death of mouse upsetting to children.

Summary of events after submission of formal challenge: Review of material by staff; retained in final decision by Youth Services Coordinator, 6/13/88; no further appeal.

Eugene Public Library, Eugene

- *Cutting Edge*, edited by Dennis Etchison (Adult)

Summary of objections: Language, sexual torture, and perversity far exceed community standards; adolescents, in particular, could be psychologically jeopardized by material.

Summary of events after submission of formal challenge: Material reviewed by committee; recommendation to retain submitted to City Librarian; retained in final decision by City Librarian, 5/19/88.

Hillsboro Public Library, Hillsboro

- *Nelson and Winnie Mandela* by Dorothy and Thomas Hoobler (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Book has no place in library; the Mandelas and the African National Congress are Communist-backed; they advocate violence and oppression against other blacks.

Summary of events after submission of formal challenge: Material reviewed by staff; retained in final decision by Library Director and Children's Librarian, 6/15/88; suggested title ordered to balance coverage of subject.

Challenges Against Library Materials in School Library Media Centers

Talent Elementary School, Phoenix

- *Impressions Reading Series*, published by Holt, Rinehart, & Winston (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Stories scary; promote witchcraft and secular humanism; lack Christian values.

Summary of events after submission of formal challenge: Formal challenge signed by two individuals; Oregon Citizens Alliance (affiliated with Citizens for Excellence in Education) coordinated public protest against curriculum use and library use of the series; two school board meetings held to receive public input; reconsideration committee reviewed the materials; retained in final decision by School Board, 6/25/88.

Obsidian Jr. High School, Redmond

- *Footfalls* by Elizabeth Harlan (Young adult)

Summary of objections: Profanity and sexual content not appropriate for the age group; objection to values portrayed.

Summary of events after submission of formal challenge: Committee reviewed material; retained in final decision by Superintendent, 6/87.

Little Butte Intermediate School, Eagle Point

- *Nightmares: poems to trouble your sleep* by Jack Prelutsky (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Book could disturb child's sleep; no learning experience or entertainment perceived in book.

Summary of events after submission of formal challenge: Educational Media Challenge Committee held hearing, received testimony, and reviewed material; committee recommended to retain book but to restrict usage by placing in the "Reserved" section; School Board accepted recommendation, 11/6/87.

Jefferson Middle School, Eugene

- *Just Good Friends* by Jane O'Connor (Young adult)

Summary of objections: Sexual references.

Summary of events after submission of formal challenge: Librarian and principal reviewed book and made final decision; book removed from school library because elementary classes also use the library; transferred to middle school with no younger children, 10/19/87.

Dry Hollow Elementary School, The Dalles

- *More Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark* by Alvin Schwartz (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Too scary and violent for children.

Summary of events after submission of formal challenge: District committee reviewed material; recommended that book be retained without restriction; School Board approved the recommendation, 4/14/88.

Jordan Valley Union High School, Jordan Valley

- *Various titles, Longarm Series* by Tabor Evans (Adult)

Summary of objections: Too sexually graphic.

Summary of events after submission of formal challenge: School Board reviewed; challenged materials removed in final decision by Board, 8/87.

Kennedy High School, Mt. Angel

- *The Witches of Worm* by Zilpha Keatley Snyder (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Illustrations too scary for children; witchcraft theme objectionable.

Summary of events after submission of formal challenge: District committee reviewed material; recommended that book be retained without restriction; District Superintendent approved the recommendation, 5/88.

Information Requests to the Clearinghouse

The Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse received 21 requests for information about individual book titles and one request for information about a 16mm movie title in the first year of its activity. The State Library reference staff provided reviews and other information responding to 21 of these requests. The Clearinghouse also received three requests for assistance with preparing collection development policies containing intellectual freedom policies and procedures for the process of reconsidering materials. Library Development staff provided sample policies, suggested procedures, and sample forms.

Cooperative Activities

The Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse was established with cooperation between the State Library, the Oregon Department of Education, the Oregon Library Association, the Oregon Educational Media Association, and the American Association of University Women. One public presentation about intellectual freedom in public libraries was made. The coordinator of the Clearinghouse serves on the OLA Intellectual Freedom Committee and sends quarterly summaries of the reconsideration reports received by the Clearinghouse to OLA, the Department of Education, the American Library Association, and the Pacific Northwest Library Association.